DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 467 783 SP 040 972

AUTHOR	Gerlach, Kent
TITLE	Let's Team Up! A Checklist for Paraeducators, Teachers and Principals. NEA Checklist Series.
INSTITUTION	National Education Association, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	2001-00-00
NOTE	62p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Education Association Professional Library Distribution Center, P.O. Box 2035, Annapolis Junction, MD 20701-2035. Tel: 800-229-4200 (Toll Free); Web site: http://www.nea.org/ books.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS
DESCRIPTORS	Administrator Responsibility; *Administrator Role; Elementary Secondary Education; Paraprofessional School Personnel; Principals; Teacher Responsibility; *Teacher Role; Teachers; *Teamwork

ABSTRACT

This checklist is designed to help paraeducators, teachers, and principals understand their roles and responsibilities as they relate to each other. It offers tips for teachers on working effectively with paraeducators, practical suggestions for paraeducators on clarifying their jobs and relationships with students and school staff, and advice for principals on the administrative supervision of paraeducators. Five sections focus on: "Introduction" (e.g., how the checklist can be beneficial and who should use it); "The Paraeducator's Role" (e.g., major responsibilities, learning school policies and procedures, working with teachers and supervisors, and performing assigned tasks); "The Teacher's Role" (e.g., major responsibilities, beginning the school year, managing paraeducators, assigning tasks, and giving feedback); "The Principal's Role" (e.g., major responsibilities, hiring paraeducators, creating a professional climate, and supporting the teacher-paraeducator team); "A Winning Team" (reasons to team up, 10 characteristics of an effective team, breaking in a new team member, and promoting and assessing the team); and "Resources" (books, articles, videos, Web sites, and organizations). (SM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

Let's Team Up!

A Checklist for

Paraeducators, Teachers and Principals

Kent Gerlach

June 2001

ED 467 783

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

ō This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

G. Felton

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

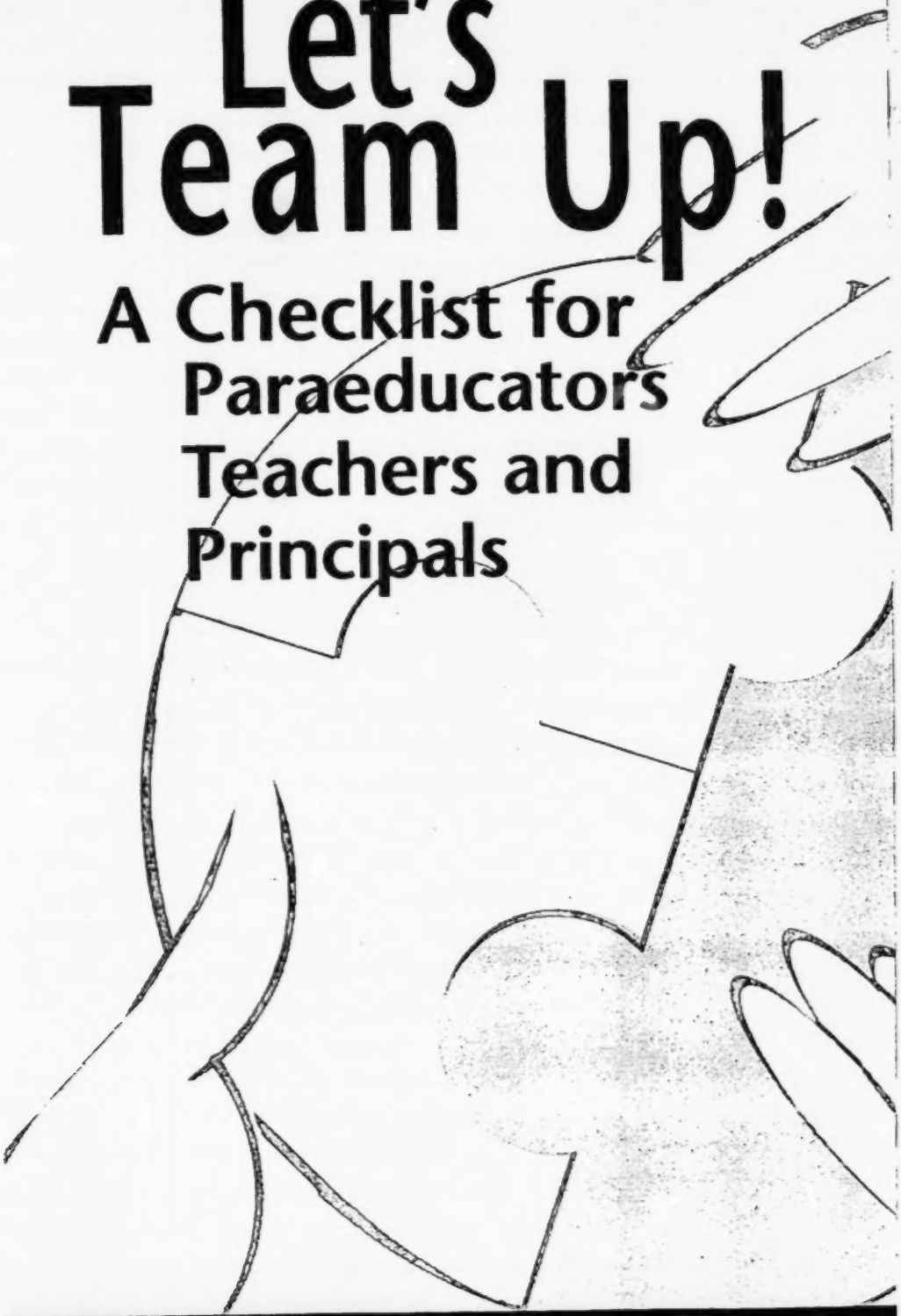
2A

SP 040 972

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Let's Team Up!

A Checklist for Paraeducators Teachers and Principals



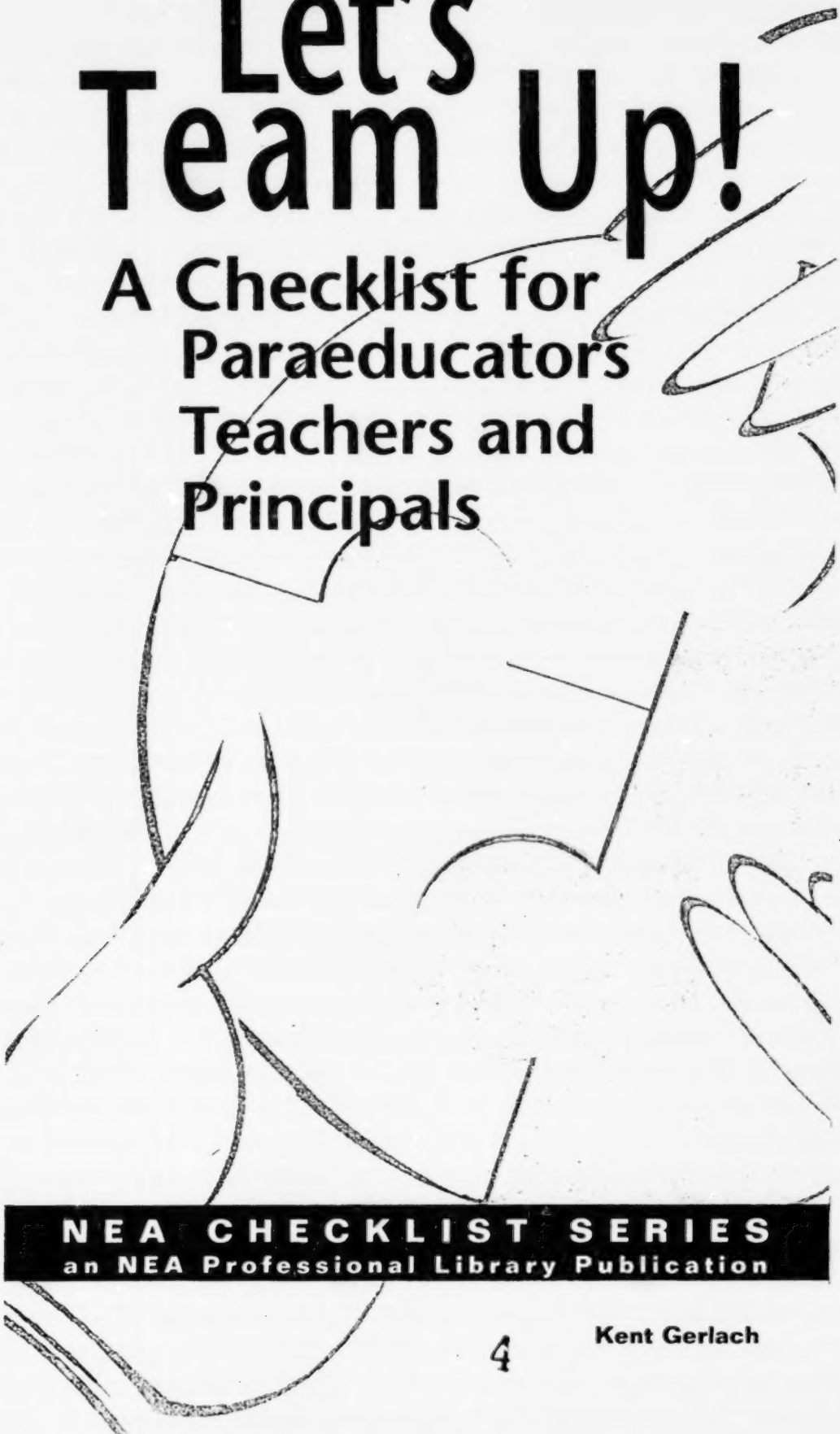
NEA CHECKLIST SERIES
an NEA Professional Library Publication

Kent Gerlach

3

Let's Team Up!

A Checklist for Paraeducators Teachers and Principals



NEA CHECKLIST SERIES
an NEA Professional Library Publication

Kent Gerlach

Copyright © 2001
National Education Association of the United States

Printing History:
First Printing: June 2001

Note: The opinions in this publication should not be construed as representing the policy or position of the National Education Association. Materials published by the NEA Professional Library are intended to be discussion documents for educators who are concerned with specialized interests of the profession.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In appreciation to the numerous paraeducators, principals, and teachers who made this book possible.

I'd also like to thank the many individuals who contributed to this very important book. From NEA: Sabrina Holcomb, Faye Northcutt, Nesa Chappell, and Tim Crawford.

Additional thanks to Bertha Caldwell, Iowa State Department; Nancy French, University of Colorado at Denver; Marilyn Likins, Utah State University; Stan Vasa, University of Nebraska at Lincoln; and Teri Wallace, University of Minnesota, for their support, encouragement, and suggestions.

And a very special thanks to Anna Lou Pickett, past Director of the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals, for her many contributions and her dedication to the issues affecting paraeducators and those who supervise them.

This checklist is a synthesis of several resources that are listed in the Resource section in the back of this book. Parts of the text on page 21 were adapted from *Using Paraeducators Effectively in the Classroom* (page 19), by Anna Lou Pickett, Stanley F. Vasa, and Allen L. Steckelberg. Parts of the text on page 55 were adapted from *Supervising Paraeducators in School Settings: A Team Approach* (page 174), edited by Anna Lou Pickett and Kent Gerlach.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kent Gerlach, Ed.D, is Professor of Special Education in the School of Education at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington. He has conducted numerous staff development workshops at the national level on a variety of topics. His current research interests include paraeducator issues, inclusion, collaboration, and team building. Dr. Gerlach coedited the text titled *Supervising Paraeducators in School Settings: A Team Approach*, published by Pro-Ed Publishers in Austin, Texas. He has been recognized nationally for this research and other work on issues concerning paraeducators. Dr. Gerlach received the PLU Faculty Achievement Award for 1995-96 and the PLU Teaching Excellence Award for 1996. Currently Dr. Gerlach is serving as an NEA consultant on issues affecting paraeducators.

CONTENTS

Introduction

8 How Can This Checklist Help You?
8 Who Can Benefit from This Checklist?
9 When Should This Checklist Be Used?
9 How Should This Checklist Be Used?

The Paraeducator's Role

15 What Are Your Major Responsibilities?
16 Learning School Policies and Procedures
17 Questions To Ask the First Week on the Job
18 Working with Teachers and Other Supervisors
19 Performing Assigned Tasks
20 Supporting Curriculum and Instruction
22 Dealing with Student Behavior
23 Assisting Students with Special Needs
24 Getting Training and Professional Development
25 Maintaining Ethics and Professionalism

The Teacher's Role

29 What Are Your Major Responsibilities?
30 Beginning the School Year
30 Introducing Paraeducators to Your Classroom
31 Managing Paraeducators
34 Assigning Tasks
35 Discussing Curriculum and Instruction
36 Working with Parents and Families
37 Discussing Student Behavior
38 Promoting Training and Professional Development
39 Giving Feedback

The Principal's Role

43 What Are Your Major Responsibilities?
44 Hiring Paraeducators
45 Creating a Professional Climate
46 Providing Building and Job Orientation
48 Sharing School Policies and Procedures
49 Supporting the Teacher-Paraeducator Team
50 Providing Training and Professional Development

A Winning Team

55 Why Team Up?
56 Ten Characteristics of an Effective Team
56 Breaking in a New Team Member
57 Promoting the Team
58 Assessing the Team

Resources

60 Books and Articles
62 Videos
62 Web Sites
64 Organizations

INTRODUCTION

The changing landscape of public education has had a significant impact on the roles of the personnel who serve in our schools. Teacher shortages, increasing numbers of English language learners, and the rising enrollment of students with disabilities and other special needs are just some of the factors that make the need for a dynamic school team more necessary than ever. In this challenging environment, paraeducators play an increasingly critical role in improving student achievement.

Paraeducators—sometimes known as paraprofessionals, instructional assistants, educational assistants, or teacher aides—are school employees who work under the direction of certified or licensed staff members to help provide instructional and other services to students and their families. Paraeducator means "along side of" and like their counterparts in the legal and medical fields—paralegals and paramedics—paraeducators assist and support the work team in a variety of ways. In many districts, paraeducators live in the school neighborhood. They sometimes speak the language of the students and provide a special liaison to the community and its culture.

In the last 20 years, the number of paraeducators has increased dramatically. Today, there are over 600,000 paraeducators working in public and private schools. One reason for the increase is that more and more children need small group and individual help. Also, the role of the paraeducator has evolved from clerical assistant to instructional assistant in most school districts.

Until recently, however, training on the role of paraeducators has been very limited—not only for paraeducators, but also for teachers and principals. This is starting to change, in part because recent federal legislation— the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and the Elementary and

Secondary Education Act (ESEA)—require appropriate training and supervision of paraeducators and target the need to establish policy and guidelines for paraeducator supervision, responsibilities, preparation, and career development.

How Can This Checklist Help You?

In addition to promoting recognition and respect among the members of the school team, the purpose of this checklist is to help paraeducators, teachers, and principals understand their roles and responsibilities as they relate to each other.

Good communication is the most important factor for any team, and the information in this book will help team members better communicate as they work together for the benefit of students. *Let's Team Up* has helpful tips for teachers on working effectively with paraeducators, practical suggestions for paraeducators on clarifying their duties and their relationships with students and school staff, and great advice for principals on the administrative supervision of paraeducators.

When every member of the school team is successful, the entire school wins.

Who Can Benefit from This Checklist?

- ▶ Paraeducators
- ▶ Teachers
- ▶ Principals
- ▶ Other administrators, such as directors of special education and Title I programs
- ▶ Teacher educators
- ▶ Student/Preservice teachers
- ▶ Related services personnel
- ▶ Parents and families
- ▶ School boards
- ▶ Staff developers and inservice coordinators

- ▶ Human resource personnel
- ▶ Early childhood providers
- ▶ Community and technical colleges
- ▶ Policymakers

When Should This Checklist Be Used?

This checklist should be used throughout the year whenever paraeducators are part of an instructional team. It will be especially beneficial to team members as they begin their work together. Paraeducators can use it to formulate questions and clarify their roles. Teachers and principals can use it to strengthen their roles as instructional and building leaders.

How Should This Checklist Be Used?

This checklist can be used as a handbook by individuals or as an instructional guide in team meetings, staff development workshops, and in/preservice training. It can serve as a valuable tool for helping everyone gain a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities as members of the school team.

This book has five main sections:

The Role of Paraeducators helps paraeducators ask the right questions about school policies and procedures, working with supervisors, performing assigned tasks, supporting curriculum and instruction, dealing with student behavior, assisting students with special needs, training and professional development, and ethics and professionalism.

The Role of Teachers helps teachers and other certified or licensed personnel orient paraeducators to the school and classroom, develop appropriate ways to manage paraeducators, assign tasks and give directions, discuss curriculum and student behavior, provide on-the-job training, and give useful feedback.

The Role of Principals helps principals and other school administrators hire qualified candidates for paraeducator positions, create a professional and supportive climate, provide building and job orientation, share school policies and procedures, support teacher-paraeducator teams, and provide appropriate training and professional development.

A Winning Team tells paraeducators, teachers, and principals why they should team up, the ten characteristics of an effective team, and how to break in a new team member. It also gives strategies for promoting and assessing the team.

The Resources Section contains a list of multimedia resources—books, videos, and Web sites on related topics.

We encourage all readers—whether paraeducators, teachers, or administrators—to review the entire book. It will give you a better understanding of your colleagues' roles, responsibilities, and concerns, which in turn will help you to better perform your job.

We also encourage readers to be flexible in using the checklists. Situations, roles, and responsibilities may be different in each school district. These lists are intended as a guide to help build team effectiveness and help clarify the role of each team member.

Helen is a paraeducator who has worked for the same Midwest school district for over twenty years. The district recognizes Helen for her dedication, sense of community, teamwork, and innate skills in working with students with special needs.

Each year, Helen's responsibilities as a paraeducator have increased, and the definition of her job has expanded. This year Helen is taking advantage of a statewide training program for paraeducators. It's the first time she's received training since beginning her career twenty years ago.

This fall, Helen will be supervised by a first-year teacher. She has also been asked to mentor a first-year paraeducator. What will Helen's major responsibilities be and what information should she share with the new paraeducator and her new supervising teacher?

check ✓
when
completed

THE PARAEDUCATOR'S ROLE

Paraeducators play a vital role in today's classrooms. Under the supervision of teachers, paraeducators often prepare learning materials, instruct individual and small groups of students, and work one-on-one with students with special needs. In the past, however, many paraeducators received little or no training on their role and specific responsibilities. Fortunately, paraeducators are now taking part in more staff development activities and are recognized and respected as an integral part of the school team. As schools change, it's important for paraeducators to be proactive as they seek to clarify their roles. The following checklist will serve as a valuable tool for paraeducators as they continue to raise questions about their role in the instructional process and school community.

What Are Your Major Responsibilities?

❑ 1 The work performed by paraeducators will vary depending upon teachers' expectations, paraeducators' skills and experience, and job assignment. Paraeducators are primarily responsible for assisting teachers or other certified or licensed staff with:

- ▶ Building and maintaining effective teams and communication.
- ▶ Maintaining student-centered, supportive environments.
- ▶ Organizing learning experiences for students.
- ▶ Implementing lessons initiated by the teacher or related-service personnel.
- ▶ Assessing student needs and progress, under teacher direction.

check ✓
when
completed

Learning School Policies and Procedures

- ❑ **1** Know school policies and procedures—ask for them if they haven't been given to you.
- ❑ **2** Make sure you understand the goals of your team and your role in helping to achieve those goals.
- ❑ **3** Request the building and district mission statement. If appropriate, request the mission statement for specific programs (Title I, special education, etc.).
- ❑ **4** Make sure you understand the "chain of command" in the district.
- ❑ **5** Ask about any unions or affiliations you will be expected to join.
- ❑ **6** Obtain information on fringe benefits, insurance, etc.
- ❑ **7** Request a map of the school building. Ask for a tour if you're not familiar with the building.
- ❑ **8** Request a staff directory.
- ❑ **9** Request copies of any parent or student handbooks.
- ❑ **10** Request a school calendar.
- ❑ **11** Request a copy of the district's discipline procedures or playground policies.
- ❑ **12** Request a copy of the district's professional development calendar or offerings for the year.
- ❑ **13** Make sure you know who your direct supervisor is. Supervisors may change when assignments change.

check ✓
when
completed

Questions To Ask the First Week on the Job

Your job will be a lot more manageable if you take the time to ask the following questions.

- ❑ **1** Is there a required job orientation for my position? When will this orientation take place?
- ❑ **2** If I'm supervised by more than one teacher, how will my time be divided? Who determines this?
- ❑ **3** When do I meet with my supervising teachers?
- ❑ **4** Who provides me with my weekly schedule?
- ❑ **5** Is there a formal evaluation of my work? Who is responsible for evaluating me? Will I receive a copy of the evaluation?
- ❑ **6** What is expected of me in terms of student discipline? Are there school discipline policies I should be aware of?
- ❑ **7** What are the district's regulations regarding harassment, teasing, and bullying?
- ❑ **8** What are the district's regulations regarding school safety (guns, etc.)?
- ❑ **9** Will I be assigned duties outside of the classroom (lunchroom, hallways, bus, playgrounds, etc.)?
- ❑ **10** When do I take my break?
- ❑ **11** When do I have lunch?
- ❑ **12** Am I expected to attend staff meetings? When and where are these held?

check ✓ when completed

- ❑ **13** Am I to attend parent conferences or IEP meetings?
- ❑ **14** How should I respond when a parent or family member raises a question regarding a child I'm working with?
- ❑ **15** How should I respond when another colleague asks for information about a student?
- ❑ **16** What student and family information is available to me?
- ❑ **17** What are the district's regulations regarding emergency procedures (fire drills, tornado drills, earthquakes, etc.)?
- ❑ **18** Am I expected to attend school activities such as open house, special events, etc.?
- ❑ **19** What will be required of me in terms of professional development? How do I document my participation in this training?
- ❑ **20** What professional development opportunities are open to me? How will I receive information about these opportunities?
- ❑ **21** How will I receive district communication? Will I be assigned an E-mail address?

Working with Teachers and Other Supervisors

- ❑ **1** Recognize the role of the principal as the building leader.
- ❑ **2** Recognize that your supervising teacher has the ultimate responsibility for instruction and classroom management.
- ❑ **3** Follow the directions given to you by your principal and your supervising teacher.

check ✓ when completed

- ❑ **4** Ask questions whenever you feel the directions are not clear.
- ❑ **5** Understand the distinctions in the roles of paraeducators and teachers.
- ❑ **6** Ask if there is a time set aside for meeting with your supervisors, including the principal.

Performing Assigned Tasks

- ❑ **1** Ask about your role in classroom organization:
  - ▶ Obtaining, preparing, and organizing instructional materials
  - ▶ Maintaining instructional equipment
  - ▶ Ordering materials and supplies
  - ▶ Preparing bulletin boards, etc.
  - ▶ Organizing the room and student centers
- ❑ **2** Ask about your role in building activities:
  - ▶ Monitoring the lunchroom, playground, hall, bathrooms
  - ▶ Accompanying students to art, music, and physical education
  - ▶ Accompanying students to therapy sessions, individual appointments
  - ▶ Accompanying children to the bus
  - ▶ School safety procedures
- ❑ **3** Ask about your role regarding clerical duties:
  - ▶ Maintaining attendance and tardy records
  - ▶ Making copies of materials
  - ▶ Filing and organizing
  - ▶ Collecting data
  - ▶ Recording grades, etc.

check ✓ when completed

- ▶ Typing and word processing
- ▶ Collecting money (books, milk, activities)
- ▶ Grading papers and checking student work for completion
- ▶ Assisting with paperwork
- ▶ Taking inventory of materials
- ▶ Ordering supplies and materials
- ▶ Collecting student homework
- ▶ Maintaining databases

Supporting Curriculum and Instruction

- ❑ **1** Implement instructional strategies that are teacher developed.
- ❑ **2** Implement lesson plans that are teacher designed.
- ❑ **3** Assist teachers with individual learning activities whenever requested.
- ❑ **4** Assist in the preparation of learning materials.
- ❑ **5** Understand the rationale, mission, philosophy, and goals of the program to which you are assigned and how this influences curriculum and instruction.
- ❑ **6** Be aware of the different methods used by teachers to accommodate a learner's needs. Assist teachers with modifications and accommodations for students with special needs.
- ❑ **7** Ask how technology is used in the classroom. Clarify your role in the use of technology.
- ❑ **8** Follow teacher's plans for strengthening students' academic skills.

check ✓ when completed

- ❑ **9** Understand educational jargon and terminology. Ask questions if you don't know a term.
- ❑ **10** Be aware of how different learning styles affect the performance of individual children.
- ❑ **11** Be aware of children's developmental patterns (cognitive, physical, social, emotional, language) at different ages and of the factors that prohibit or impede typical development.
- ❑ **12** Understand the need for learning, performance, and assessment standards set by the local district and state.
- ❑ **13** Ask about your role in monitoring student performance.
- ❑ **14** Find out how observations of student progress are to be recorded.
- ❑ **15** Before beginning a lesson, ask yourself the following questions:
  - ▶ Have I met with the supervising teacher?
  - ▶ Have I reviewed the lesson plan given to me by the teacher?
  - ▶ Are the directions clear?
  - ▶ Do I feel adequately prepared for the instruction?
  - ▶ Are the teacher's objectives clear?
  - ▶ Do I know how to begin the lesson?
  - ▶ Do I know what to do when the student responds appropriately?
  - ▶ Do I know how to handle inappropriate responses?
  - ▶ Am I prepared for off-task student behavior?
  - ▶ Do I have the materials ready?
  - ▶ Do I feel prepared to use the materials?

check ✓ when completed

- ▶ Do I have the teaching area arranged efficiently?
- ▶ Is the teaching area comfortable for the student?
- ▶ Is the teaching area comfortable for me?
- ▶ Do I know how to conclude the lesson?

❑ **16** After the lesson is over, ask yourself the following questions:

- ▶ Have I recorded behavioral observations about the student?
- ▶ Have I completed the record or summary of the student's performance?
- ▶ Am I ready to evaluate the session with my supervisor?
- ▶ How will I communicate the results of the lesson to my supervising teacher?

Dealing with Student Behavior

❑ **1** Implement student behavioral plans that have been designed by certified staff.

❑ **2** Understand district policy and procedural safeguards regarding the behavior management of students.

❑ **3** Understand effective strategies for dealing with verbal aggression and other forms of resistance.

❑ **4** Ask about your role in:

- ▶ Observing and charting student behavior.
- ▶ Correcting student behavior.
- ▶ Enforcing school and class rules.
- ▶ Assisting students with interpersonal problem solving and conflict resolution.
- ▶ Overseeing student activities.

check ✓ when completed

- ▶ Completing required discipline documentation.
- ▶ Assisting in crisis intervention.
- ▶ Maintaining school safety.

❑ **5** Ask questions about the behavior management strategies used by each teacher you work with. Teachers may have different approaches to behavior management.

Assisting Students with Special Needs

❑ **1** Request general disability or health information if you do not understand the characteristics of the disability.

❑ **2** Understand the roles of physical and occupational therapists, speech and language pathologists, and school nurses in the delivery-related services.

❑ **3** Ask about your role in:

- ▶ Attending parent conferences.
- ▶ Attending Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings, as requested by the teacher.
- ▶ Working with related-service personnel and other team members.
- ▶ Accommodating and modifying curriculum and materials under teacher direction.
- ▶ Implementing Behavioral Intervention Plans (BIPs).
- ▶ Monitoring and documenting student progress toward IEP goals.
- ▶ Obtaining services for students.
- ▶ Reporting suspected child abuse and neglect.
- ▶ Informing staff regarding mental and emotional needs of students.

check ✓ when completed

- ▶ Delivering transition services.
- ▶ Supporting family service plans.
- ▶ Performing emergency procedures and participating in safety drills.
- ▶ Responding to medically related needs of students as required by state law.
- ▶ Administering medication to students.
- ▶ Providing personal physical care to students.
- ▶ Instructing students in personal hygiene and safety practices.
- ▶ Monitoring physical environment for safety and correcting unsafe conditions where possible.
- ▶ Communicating with parents of children with special needs. (Check school or district policy.)
- ▶ Collaborating and communicating with other education personnel on policies, laws, issues, and ethics regarding students in special education programs.
- ▶ Educating others regarding children with special needs.

❑ **4** Follow and use universal health precautions for preventing illnesses and infections and proper procedures for lifting students and heavy objects.

Getting Training and Professional Development

❑ **1** Ask what staff development will be required of you.

❑ **2** Find out what staff development will be available to you.

❑ **3** Ask how your training—workshops, etc.—should be documented.

check ✓ when completed

- ❑ **4** Ask about the district career ladder program.
- ❑ **5** Accept responsibility for improving your skills.
- ❑ **6** Obtain training to meet the needs of students required by their IEPs.
- ❑ **7** Request state and district staff development policies or plans.
- ❑ **8** Request a list of training opportunities in the local areas, such as community college programs, district training opportunities, state educational agency training, etc.

Maintaining Ethics and Professionalism

- ❑ **1** Maintain your own wellness, composure, and emotional stability while working with students and staff.
- ❑ **2** Always present yourself as a positive role model for students.
- ❑ **3** Share relevant information with other team members to facilitate problem solving, program planning and student concerns.
- ❑ **4** Participate in regularly scheduled staff or teacher meetings as requested.
- ❑ **5** Understand the value of a team approach to the delivery of instructional services.
- ❑ **6** Follow the directions of the supervising teacher and other licensed staff.
- ❑ **7** Provide accurate information about students to those who need the information (e.g., supervising teacher, related services personnel, and other staff).

check ✓ when completed

- ❑ **8** Discuss confidential school issues only with appropriate school personnel.
- ❑ **9** If you have concerns about a teacher, discuss those concerns directly with the teacher.
- ❑ **10** Discuss a child's progress or educational program only with the teacher who is responsible for that child's instruction.
- ❑ **11** Refer concerns expressed by parents, students, or other staff to your supervising teacher.
- ❑ **12** When you feel problems cannot be resolved, use the district grievance procedures. Make sure you understand those procedures.
- ❑ **13** Respect the legal and human rights of children and youth.
- ❑ **14** Respect parental rights.
- ❑ **15** Follow the ethical guidelines of the profession, organizations, etc.

Bobbie, a special education teacher in a Northwest school district, supervises three paraeducators in an inclusion program. When Bobbie was interviewed for the position, she wasn't told that she would be supervising three adults—two first-year paraeducators and one veteran paraeducator who is new to the district. Even though Bobbie has had very little training on managing paraeducators, she reports that her group is doing well so far because they have taken a team approach to working together.

Bobbie often feels frustrated, however, that so much of the district's paraeducator training falls on teachers. One of her biggest concerns is the lack of communication and planning time. Bobbie says, "I was taught to plan for children, not other adults in my classroom."

Bobbie wants to be an effective supervisor, but she's not sure always sure of the best approach to take. What are Bobbie's major responsibilities and what does she need to know to direct the work of the paraeducators in her classroom?

THE TEACHER'S ROLE

Teachers are most often responsible for the direct supervision of paraeducators. Most teachers, however, have had little training or experience supervising another adult in the classroom. Some teachers may feel uncomfortable in this important role, but it's to everyone's benefit that teachers learn how to effectively direct the work of paraeducators. The teacher gets an instructional assistant who can make a genuine difference in the classroom, the paraeducator gets a meaningful professional experience, and the school gets a valuable member of the education team. Following are some suggestions for developing appropriate supervision, direction, and management of the paraeducators assigned to you.

What Are Your Major Responsibilities?

Teachers have responsibility for supervising and integrating paraeducators into learning environments, including:

- ▶ Planning the tasks that paraeducators will perform.
- ▶ Developing schedules for paraeducators.
- ▶ Appropriately delegating responsibilities to paraeducators.
- ▶ Monitoring the day-to-day performance of paraeducators.
- ▶ Providing feedback and on-the-job training to paraeducators.
- ▶ Sharing relevant information about paraeducator strengths and training needs with principals or other administrators.

check ✓ when completed

Beginning the School Year

- ❑ **1** Provide an atmosphere of respect, recognition, and open communication.
- ❑ **2** Meet with paraeducators before the first day of school or their first day on the job.
- ❑ **3** Introduce the paraeducator to other teachers, paraeducators, and support personnel in the building.
- ❑ **4** Discuss school rules and policies regarding behavior on the playground and in the lunchroom, bathrooms, hallways, library, etc.
- ❑ **5** Acquaint the paraeducator with school records and the way they are monitored and used.
- ❑ **6** Show the paraeducator where supplies and materials are kept and how they are obtained.
- ❑ **7** Discuss building and classroom emergency procedures.
- ❑ **8** Discuss school safety issues and policies.

Introducing Paraeducators to Your Classroom

- ❑ **1** Allow the paraeducator to spend a minimum of one day observing you and other teachers and students.
- ❑ **2** Provide an initial orientation to your classroom, including:
  - ▶ Daily routines
  - ▶ Daily and weekly schedules
  - ▶ Instructional procedures

check ✓ when completed

- ▶ Lesson plan format
- ▶ Procedures for handing in and posting student assignments

❑ **3** Explain the activities that take place at the beginning of each class, such as:

- ▶ Attendance recording
- ▶ Warm-up routines
- ▶ Lunch counts
- ▶ Special services, such as speech therapy and other special programs

❑ **4** Explain your class policy regarding:

- ▶ Classroom procedures (e.g., posting and handing in assignments, etc.)
- ▶ Room organization and clean-up
- ▶ Dismissing the class and small groups
- ▶ Student rules
- ▶ Bathroom rules, if relevant
- ▶ Use of pens vs. pencils
- ▶ Neatness, incomplete work, late or missing work, and make-up work
- ▶ Parent and family communication

❑ **5** Discuss the short- and long-term goals of the class or program and students' strengths and weaknesses.

❑ **6** Provide a spot for the paraeducator to put his or her belongings, materials, etc.

Managing Paraeducators

❑ **1** Take time to provide clear instructions and complete information to the paraeducator. Ask yourself the following questions:

- ▶ Did I explain what task needs to be done and why, how, and where it will be done?

check ✓ when completed

- ▶ Did I explain how the paraeducator will be observed and supervised?
- ▶ Did I discuss how the paraeducator will provide feedback to me?
- ▶ Do I speak a team language, such as "It would be good for both of us if we . . ."
- ▶ Did I ask for a specific action or did I phrase my request in ambiguous terms?
- ▶ Did I provide a written plan?
- ▶ Did I set a mutually agreed-upon deadline when I delegated a task?
- ▶ Did I confirm important issues in writing?

❑ **2** Discuss the appropriate roles of the teacher and the paraeducator.

❑ **3** Discuss the state and the district's definition for "paraeducator" and district policy regarding a paraeducator's role.

❑ **4** Ask about the paraeducator's expectations of you, the instructional supervisor.

❑ **5** Share your expectations for the paraeducator.

❑ **6** Communicate in a clear and receptive manner.

❑ **7** Build time in your schedule to plan and communicate with the paraeducator. Communicate with your principal if there is a problem establishing a set communication time.

❑ **8** Provide a schedule that includes a set meeting time, either daily or weekly. Discuss how you'll communicate with one another if you don't have a daily meeting time.

check ✓ when completed

- ❑ **9** Provide a clear, daily direction for coordinating plans, schedules, tasks, and feedback.
- ❑ **10** Discuss goals, priorities, and plans with paraeducators on a daily basis. Do it first thing every morning.
- ❑ **11** Discuss the roles of the substitute and paraeducator when the teacher is absent.
- ❑ **12** Discuss the role of the "parasubstitute" when the paraeducator is absent.
- ❑ **13** With input from the paraeducator, develop a paraeducator substitute plan or guide.
- ❑ **14** To make the most of meeting and planning times with the paraeducator:
  - ▶ Communicate the purpose/agenda in advance.
  - ▶ Take a problem-solving approach.
  - ▶ Hold the meeting in a site where instructional materials and records are readily available and interruptions are minimized.
- ❑ **15** Discuss problems and ideas with paraeducators. Ask for their ideas, suggestions, and opinions.
- ❑ **16** Take time to listen to the paraeducator's concerns and questions.
- ❑ **17** Allow for individual initiative. Don't expect the paraeducator to do things exactly the way you do them.
- ❑ **18** Develop a personalized paraeducator job description for your classroom or program.

check ✓
when
completed

Assigning Tasks

- ❑ **1** Decide which tasks and duties could be delegated.
- ❑ **2** Prepare work assignments for paraeducators based on program needs, learning objectives for students, and paraeducators' skills and experience.
- ❑ **3** Consider the strengths, interests, and needs of paraeducators when planning schedules and assignments.
- ❑ **4** Involve paraeducators in planning and organizing learning experiences based on paraeducators' qualifications.
- ❑ **5** Provide the paraeducator with a written list of duties and responsibilities.
- ❑ **6** Organize schedules that will allow for cooperation, planning, and information sharing.
- ❑ **7** Discuss the paraeducator's role in any clerical duties, such as:
  - ▶ Taking attendance
  - ▶ Copying materials
  - ▶ Recording grades
  - ▶ Ordering supplies
  - ▶ Taking inventory of supplies
  - ▶ Organizing classroom materials
  - ▶ Collecting student work
- ❑ **8** If the paraeducator is working with more than one teacher, discuss how the paraeducator's time will be divided.
- ❑ **9** Develop a system to monitor task performance.

check ✓ when completed

- ❑ **10** Don't constantly interrupt the paraeducator during the day. Organize work assignments to keep interruptions at a minimum.
- ❑ **11** Coordinate activities with the paraeducator so that both of you can get as much done as possible.
- ❑ **12** Organize and provide the materials and resources the paraeducator needs to carry out his or her assignment.

Discussing Curriculum and Instruction

- ❑ **1** Introduce the paraeducator to instructional procedures.
- ❑ **2** Discuss district and classroom learning goals.
- ❑ **3** Explain your teaching philosophy and teaching style.
- ❑ **4** Discuss your lesson-plan format.
- ❑ **5** Encourage the involvement of paraeducators in setting goals and planning, implementing, and evaluating instructional activities.
- ❑ **6** Share teacher guides for texts.
- ❑ **7** Discuss how students are motivated in the learning environment.
- ❑ **8** Introduce paraeducators to classroom learning stations and explain how they are used.
- ❑ **9** Allow paraeducators time to familiarize themselves with educational software and technology.
- ❑ **10** Demonstrate the operation of instructional and audiovisual equipment.

check ✓ when completed

- ❑ **11** If the paraeducator is primarily assigned to one student, clarify the teacher's role in the student's instruction, including the times the teacher will be working with the student.
- ❑ **12** Discuss Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for students with special needs. Plan short-term objectives and lessons that address IEP goals.
- ❑ **13** Provide assistance and direction to paraeducators who work in semi-independent situations, such as:
  - ▶ Community transition support
  - ▶ Work study
  - ▶ Transportation, etc.
- ❑ **14** Support paraeducators in using modified instructional plans and materials to accommodate the learning needs of various students.
- ❑ **15** Encourage the paraeducator to share observations of students' needs.
- ❑ **16** Explain the paraeducator's role in:
  - ▶ Drill practice
  - ▶ Testing (assessment)
  - ▶ Written assignments
  - ▶ Adapting or modifying curriculum according to teacher direction
  - ▶ Technology
  - ▶ Monitoring student performance

Working with Parents and Families

- ❑ **1** Discuss the paraeducator's role with the parents and families of students.
- ❑ **2** Discuss the importance of confidentiality and parent communication.

check ✓ when completed

- ❑ **3** Address the importance of respecting and listening to students.
- ❑ **4** Discuss health-related needs of specific students, if appropriate.
- ❑ **5** Discuss the paraeducator's role, if any, in parent conferences and IEP meetings.

Discussing Student Behavior

- ❑ **1** Discuss student accountability and expectations.
- ❑ **2** Discuss time-out and school suspension policies.
- ❑ **3** Discuss discipline in the classroom and your expectations for managing students' behavior. Include your views on positive reinforcement.
- ❑ **4** Explain your policy on students who talk during seatwork.
- ❑ **5** Discuss what behavior is expected of students when they've completed an assignment.
- ❑ **6** Discuss classroom rules and regulations.
- ❑ **7** If relevant, explain student bathroom rules (e.g., permission to go, lining up, etc.).
- ❑ **8** Explain out-of-seat policies.
- ❑ **9** Explain expected behavior of students in both large and small groups.
- ❑ **10** Address the importance of respecting and listening to students.

check ✓ when completed

- ❑ **11** Discuss positive Behavioral Intervention Plans (BIPs) for students with special needs.
- ❑ **12** Demonstrate how to observe and chart student behavior.
- ❑ **13** Train the paraeducator to observe and record student progress.

Promoting Training and Professional Development

- ❑ **1** Provide paraeducators with information on district professional development opportunities. Encourage them to participate.
- ❑ **2** Provide opportunities for on-the-job training.
- ❑ **3** Plan and provide on-the-job coaching based on the needs of the paraeducator.
- ❑ **4** Develop a procedure for documenting paraeducator staff development.
- ❑ **5** Discuss how training in behavior management approaches will be provided.
- ❑ **6** Discuss how training in instructional approaches will be provided.
- ❑ **7** Set up a mentor program for paraeducators. Arrange for veterans to mentor beginners.
- ❑ **8** Provide ongoing advocacy for the paraeducator's role in the building and district.
- ❑ **9** Provide ongoing advocacy for inservice training opportunities directly related to the daily work of paraeducators.

check ✓ when completed

Giving Feedback

- ❑ **1** Plan a program of early observations and positive, structured support, such as mentoring.
- ❑ **2** Compliment paraeducators on their contributions to the program and let them know how much you appreciate their assistance.
- ❑ **3** Provide regular, constructive feedback regarding each paraeducator's work performance.
- ❑ **4** Share your plan to give paraeducators feedback on their performance. Let them know how and when feedback will be provided.
- ❑ **5** When giving feedback, begin by saying what the paraeducator does well, then giving suggestions for improvement.
- ❑ **6** Discuss the evaluation criteria that will be used by the district to assess the paraeducator's work performance.
- ❑ **7** Discuss formal and informal assessment and the paraeducator's role in assessment.
- ❑ **8** Provide a way for both teacher and paraeducator to evaluate the team relationship.
- ❑ **9** Use the following checklist to provide feedback on the paraeducator's skills. Note whether each skill is well developed or needs improvement:
  - ▶ Follows lesson as planned
  - ▶ Establishes rapport with students
  - ▶ Shows understanding and sensitivity to student needs
  - ▶ Gives clear instructions to the student or group
  - ▶ Uses appropriate questions and cues

- Uses materials effectively
- Teaches lesson objective
- Keeps lesson focused on goals and objectives
- Keeps students on task
- Gives appropriate feedback to students
- Uses reinforcement effectively
- Records students' responses
- Stays on task and uses allotted time effectively

Tom is a principal in a growing West Coast school district. He supervises 19 teachers, 10 paraeducators, and 12 other education support personnel. Many of the paraeducators work with children in special education, Title I, or bilingual programs. Before they were hired, most of the paraeducators were parent volunteers.

Tom knows that the paraeducators in his school play an increasingly important role in instruction. Tom, however, does not fully understand his role in paraeducator supervision. "I used to leave the directing of the work of paraeducators to the teacher, but I know I have major responsibilities also."

This year Tom has been asked by the district to delineate the role principals play in paraeducator employment, supervision, and training. What should Tom tell them? What are a principal's major responsibilities and what steps should he or she take to create an effective school team?

THE PRINCIPAL'S ROLE

The principal and other school administrators are critical to the success of instructional teams. The principal takes the leadership role in creating a school climate in which paraeducators have a professional identity and contribute to activities that help to enhance student achievement. Even though teachers are responsible for the day-to-day instructional supervision of paraeducators, principals are responsible for the administrative supervision that includes the hiring, preparation, evaluation, and dismissal of paraeducators. The following checklists will serve as a guide for administrators who want to improve the effectiveness of paraeducators and the teachers who direct their work.

What Are Your Major Responsibilities?

The principal and/or other school administrators have the primary responsibility for:

- Recruiting, interviewing, and hiring paraeducators.
- Assigning paraeducators to specific programs, teachers, classrooms, or educational teams.
- Developing appropriate job descriptions.
- Developing appropriate policies for the employment, training, and supervision of paraeducators.
- Evaluating paraeducators and their supervising teachers.
- Promoting effective teamwork in the building and within teacher-paraeducator teams.
- Providing professional development opportunities for paraeducators and those who supervise them.

check ✓ when completed

- ▶ Providing leadership in support of effective teamwork.

Hiring Paraeducators

Too often job expectations for paraeducators are vague, misleading, and even inappropriate. A clear job description will clarify the roles of the paraeducator in the school program and help you start the hiring process on solid footing.

- ❑ **1** Work with human resources personnel to improve job descriptions for paraeducators.
- ❑ **2** Advocate for paraeducators whenever possible.
- ❑ **3** Advocate for appropriate teacher certification.
- ❑ **4** Make the district school board aware of the role paraeducators play in your building.
- ❑ **5** Consult with all necessary personnel (including teachers and paraeducators) in the development of the job description.
- ❑ **6** Use district-level job descriptions to provide the foundation for school-generated job descriptions. Job descriptions for paraeducators should include the following:
  - ▶ Job title that reflects current trends in paraeducator employment
  - ▶ Position setting
  - ▶ Qualifications
  - ▶ Purpose for the position
  - ▶ Professional development requirements
  - ▶ Details regarding specific duties and responsibilities
  - ▶ Hours of employment, salary, fringe benefits
  - ▶ Supervision guidelines

check ✓ when completed

- ❑ **7** Whenever possible, include the supervising teacher in the job interview.
- ❑ **8** Share the district and school mission statements with the job candidate in the interview.
- ❑ **9** Explain fringe benefits package in the interview.
- ❑ **10** Formulate interview questions for paraeducators that address the following:
  - ▶ Reasons they want to work at your school and in the district
  - ▶ Reasons they want to work with children
  - ▶ Previous work experience and specific work experience with children
  - ▶ Long-range career goals
  - ▶ Personal qualities and skills they can offer students, teachers, the school
  - ▶ Views on inclusion
  - ▶ Views on diversity issues
  - ▶ Hobbies and interests that might contribute to job performance
  - ▶ Job candidate's definition of the term paraeducator, instructional assistant (or whatever term is used in your district)
  - ▶ How they feel about being supervised by more than one person, if appropriate

Creating a Professional Climate

- ❑ **1** Take a leadership role in creating a school climate in which paraeducators have a professional identity.
- ❑ **2** Provide an atmosphere of respect, recognition, and open communication.

check ✓ when completed

- ❑ **3** Make sure new paraeducators are introduced to all faculty and other educational support personnel.
- ❑ **4** Develop standards for assigning paraeducators to jobs for which they are qualified or have skills.
- ❑ **5** Appoint paraeducators to school-based teams and committees whenever possible. Paraeducators are often not represented on school committees, even though their input is valuable.
- ❑ **6** Provide a common planning time for team members.
- ❑ **7** Make sure that newsletters, staff development activities, and other district communications include information for and about paraeducators.
- ❑ **8** Inform parents and families about the role of the paraeducator in the implementation of their child's program. This is especially important in special education and Title I programs.
- ❑ **9** Inform the superintendant and school board about the positive work of paraeducators in the district.
- ❑ **10** Work closely with the directors of special education, Title I, and other special programs on specific paraeducator roles and responsibilities.

Providing Building and Job Orientation

- ❑ **1** Prepare a list of terms frequently used in the building that may need a definition or explanation, e.g., Title I, IEP (Individualized Education Plan), LD (learning disability), BD (behavior disorder), etc.

check ✓ when completed

❑ **2** Make sure newly hired paraeducators know some basic building information, such as:

- ▶ Parking availability
- ▶ Location of staff restrooms
- ▶ Location of staff lounge
- ▶ Scheduling for staff breaks and lunch
- ▶ Location of stored materials and procedures for obtaining them

❑ **3** Appoint a committee to design a building-based handbook for paraeducators. The handbook could contain the following:

- ▶ Paraeducator definition
- ▶ Map of building
- ▶ Phone numbers of faculty and staff
- ▶ Emergency procedures (fire drill, tornado, earthquake, etc.)
- ▶ Job descriptions
- ▶ Chain of command (organizational structure)
- ▶ Staff development opportunities
- ▶ Supervision policy
- ▶ Evaluation criteria
- ▶ Appeal/grievance procedures
- ▶ District policies (confidentiality, etc.)
- ▶ Discipline procedures (playground rules, cafeteria rules, etc.)
- ▶ Procedures to report child abuse and neglect
- ▶ School calendar
- ▶ Procedures for substitutes
- ▶ Person to call if they are ill or absent
- ▶ School schedules (daily and weekly schedules, meeting schedules, etc.)
- ▶ Other items specific to school activities

check ✓ when completed

- ❑ **4** Make sure paraeducators are comfortable with tasks assigned to them (e.g., working with medically fragile children).
- ❑ **5** Make sure paraeducators know that asking for assistance is a strength, not a weakness. Invite their questions.

Sharing School Policies and Procedures

- ❑ **1** Set up a procedure to ensure that paraeducators receive important building and district communications. (Set up E-mail addresses.)
- ❑ **2** Share with paraeducators any state and federal policies regarding their role. Include information about IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) and ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act).
- ❑ **3** Give paraeducators any district booklets on the rights of parents, especially those rights related to students with disabilities.
- ❑ **4** Give paraeducators a copy of any student handbooks.
- ❑ **5** Make sure paraeducators are informed if they are to attend staff meetings. If this is not a requirement, make sure they receive minutes of the meeting or a summary of the issues that could affect them.
- ❑ **6** Share the district and building mission statements with paraeducators.
- ❑ **7** Introduce paraeducators to professional organizations, such as the National Education Association (NEA) and the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC).
- ❑ **8** Introduce paraeducators to the district/state Code of Ethics or Code of Conduct.

check ✓ when completed

- ❑ **9** Give paraeducators copies of state assessment requirements, such as:
  - ▶ Learning goals
  - ▶ Legislation and policy statements that could affect their role
  - ▶ Special education policy, including information on the rights of parents
  - ▶ Title I policy
  - ▶ Bilingual program policies
- ❑ **10** Share the district evaluation process with paraeducators, teachers, and other licensed staff.

Supporting the Teacher-Paraeducator Team

- ❑ **1** Make sure each paraeducator has a clearly defined role and that these roles have been communicated to all paraeducators and their supervising teachers.
- ❑ **2** Meet with all new teachers to make sure they understand their responsibilities in directing the work of paraeducators. Make sure teachers have a clearly defined role in supervision.
- ❑ **3** Make sure paraeducators and teachers have the skills necessary for effective teamwork.
- ❑ **4** Help the paraeducator understand who the supervisor is for each assignment and the role of that supervisor (see The Teacher's Role).
- ❑ **5** Build a time in the schedule for paraeducators and teachers to communicate and plan together.
- ❑ **6** Hold meetings with all building-level paraeducators at least monthly.

check ✓ when completed

Providing Training and Professional Development

- ❑ **1** Determine what local, state, federal, and other legal mandates exist for paraeducator staff development and supervision.
- ❑ **2** Design a professional development plan for paraeducators if one does not exist.
- ❑ **3** Offer a variety of options for supporting and preparing paraeducators:
  - ▶ Support groups
  - ▶ Mentorships
  - ▶ Study teams
  - ▶ Opportunities to be members of a professional organization at both the state and national level
  - ▶ Information about local union membership
  - ▶ Information about state and district-required training and staff development
- ❑ **4** Invite paraeducators to appropriate staff development activities and conferences offered to teachers—encourage partnerships with the teacher and paraeducator attending as a team.
- ❑ **5** Provide time and resources for staff development before paraeducators begin their assignment and ongoing staff development thereafter.
- ❑ **6** Collaborate with other districts to co-host training opportunities.
- ❑ **7** Determine how paraeducators are being utilized in the building and district.
- ❑ **8** Take time to observe paraeducators on a regular basis.

check ✓ when completed

- ❑ **9** Develop a needs assessment instrument (for staff development, etc.)
- ❑ **10** Assess prior staff development activities.
- ❑ **11** Develop an evaluation for staff development activities.
- ❑ **12** Determine what incentives are needed for paraeducator staff development:
  - ▶ Salary scale
  - ▶ Stipends
  - ▶ Release time
  - ▶ Professional credit units
  - ▶ Career ladder opportunities
- ❑ **13** Arrange for "parasubstitutes" if professional development is scheduled during the workday.
- ❑ **14** Ensure that paraeducators are trained properly to respond to emergencies and school safely issues.
- ❑ **15** Make paraeducators aware of career ladder programs that could lead to teacher certification.
- ❑ **16** Workshop topics for teachers and administrators on how to work effectively with paraeducators could focus on the following areas:
  - ▶ Roles and responsibilities of team members
  - ▶ Classroom management
  - ▶ Planning and scheduling
  - ▶ Communication and team building
  - ▶ Directing, managing, and supervising
  - ▶ Characteristics of adult learners
  - ▶ Providing feedback
  - ▶ On-the-job training and coaching
  - ▶ Interpersonal problem solving
  - ▶ Professionalism and ethics

❑ **17** Workshop topics for paraeducators on how to work effectively with students could focus on the following areas:

- ▶ Roles and responsibilities of team members
- ▶ Behavior management and discipline
- ▶ Basic understanding of specific disabilities
- ▶ Inclusion and special education
- ▶ Confidentiality issues
- ▶ Diversity issues
- ▶ Stress management/wellness issues
- ▶ Child development and developmentally appropriate practice
- ▶ Specialty care: lifting, back care, etc.
- ▶ Reporting of child abuse and neglect
- ▶ Data collection
- ▶ Conflict resolution
- ▶ Instructional strategies
- ▶ First aid and CPR
- ▶ Basic technology skills
- ▶ Legal and human rights of children
- ▶ Special education
- ▶ Communication and team building
- ▶ Professionalism and ethics

A WINNING TEAM

Pine Bluff School in the Southwest has won numerous awards for staff development and school achievement. This Title I school also serves many students with special needs in inclusion classrooms. In addition, nearly 50% of the students speak English as a second language. Five years ago, Pine Bluff was struggling to adust to these challenges. Today, it's an award-winning school. What turned Pine Bluff around?

The principal, with the support of a dedicated staff, instituted a three-year plan with the goal of improving communication, collaboration, and teamwork throughout the school. Both teachers and paraeducators receive training on their roles, and the school district has an extensive paraeducator staff development program in collaboration with the local community college. Paraeducators are also included in staff meetings and the school provides a set planning time for teachers and paraeducators to communicate. In addition, the school provides a peer-mentoring program for beginning teachers and paraeducators.

What can other schools learn from the Pine Bluff experience? What are some of the factors that contribute to building a dynamic school team?

check ✓ when completed

A WINNING TEAM

The interdependent working relationship of today's paraeducators, teachers, and principals is often like a jigsaw puzzle. Unfortunately, they don't have a picture on the front of a box to know what the puzzle is supposed to look like when it's finished. Sometimes they don't even have all the pieces. That's why, in today's education climate, the most successful schools operate as a team. School personnel understand the importance of a good working relationship and are focused on team goals. They form relationships that are built on good communication, trust, respect, and recognition. When paraeducators, teachers, and principals team up to connect the pieces of the puzzle, students are the ultimate beneficiaries.

Why Team Up?

- ❑ **1** Team members support and mentor one another.
- ❑ **2** Teams reduce the feeling of isolation that is common in education.
- ❑ **3** Teams foster professional and personal growth by sharing knowledge and skills with each other.
- ❑ **4** Teams develop unique, creative, and flexible solutions to problems.
- ❑ **5** Teams maximize each member's potential, strengths, and contributions.
- ❑ **6** Teams establish goals together, and team members feel a sense of ownership toward these goals.
- ❑ **7** A team spirit develops when people work well together.

check ✓ when completed

Ten Characteristics of an Effective Team

- ❑ **1** All team members understand why the team exists and are committed to accomplishing the mission and goals of the team.
- ❑ **2** Team members know what needs to be done, and by whom, to achieve team goals.
- ❑ **3** Team members know their roles in getting tasks done and how to use the skills and expertise of each member most effectively.
- ❑ **4** Decision-making and supervision guidelines are clearly understood by all team members.
- ❑ **5** Team members feel their unique personalities and strengths are appreciated and well utilized.
- ❑ **6** Team members are able to share ideas and give input into discussions.
- ❑ **7** Team members find team meetings efficient and productive. Teams meet on a regular schedule.
- ❑ **8** Team members know clearly when the team has been successful and share in this success equally.
- ❑ **9** Staff development is provided and is taken advantage of by team members.
- ❑ **10** Feedback is provided to all team members.

Breaking in a New Team Member

When a new teacher, paraeducator, or administrator arrives, does it make you a little nervous or apprehensive? It often signals brand new expectations and a new set of rules. Here are several suggestions for making a positive adjustment to a new team member.

check ✓ when completed

- ❑ **1** Do everything you can to create a good first impression. The first impression is often a lasting one.
- ❑ **2** Be flexible and open to change. Don't dwell on the way things were done in the past. New conditions may call for new procedures.
- ❑ **3** Help your new team member as much as you can. Remember that the new person has to adjust to a new situation, too. In fact, the supervisor may need you as much as you need the new supervisor.
- ❑ **4** Find out which objectives and priorities are most important to your new team member.
- ❑ **5** As problems and questions come up, address them immediately. Deal with them openly and honestly rather than going behind the backs of team members.
- ❑ **6** Be prepared for change. Some things are beyond your control. If you expect things to work out well, they probably will.
- ❑ **7** Patience, understanding, initiative, and hard work will go a long way toward resolving most issues.

Promoting the Team

- ❑ **1** Commit yourself to being part of the team.
- ❑ **2** Emphasize cooperation, not competition.
- ❑ **3** Focus on team and student outcomes.
- ❑ **4** Accentuate and build team strengths.
- ❑ **5** Approach time from a team standpoint, remembering that different people perceive time differently. Develop an ongoing dialogue on how best to use team time.

check ✓ when completed

- ❑ **6** Take time to communicate effectively. This involves being a good listener as well as a good talker.
- ❑ **7** When instructing others, be sure to provide complete information and clear instructions. Check to be sure your teammates really understand everything.
- ❑ **8** Improve team methods of planning and coordinating projects and activities.
- ❑ **9** Give team members plenty of advance notice for team meetings, deadlines, etc.
- ❑ **10** Make sure expectations are reasonable and clear.
- ❑ **11** Discuss goals, objectives, priorities, and plans with team members.
- ❑ **12** Make sure team members are well informed.
- ❑ **13** Set aside regular time slots for meeting with team members.
- ❑ **14** Ask team members for ideas on how to improve team relationships and roles.
- ❑ **15** Look for ways to save time for the people you work with.
- ❑ **16** Follow a written agenda to make sure your team meetings are productive.
- ❑ **17** Show up for meetings and assignments on time.

Assessing the Team

Have each team member read the following statements and check yes or no for each one. Then have them list areas of improvement.

- ❑ **1** Team members understand team goals.

check ✓ when completed

- ❑ **2** Team members are committed to these goals.
- ❑ **3** Team members are supportive of and interested in each other's roles and responsibilities.
- ❑ **4** Team members have the emotional maturity to acknowledge and confront conflict openly.
- ❑ **5** Team members listen to others with openness and understanding.
- ❑ **6** Team members value each other's ideas and contributions.
- ❑ **7** Team members feel comfortable contributing ideas and solutions to problems.
- ❑ **8** Team members recognize, reward, and give feedback on team performance.
- ❑ **9** Team members encourage and appreciate comments about team efforts.
- ❑ **10** Team meetings are held at a specific time and on a regular basis.
- ❑ **11** Constructive feedback is given freely to improve decision making.
- ❑ **12** Information is shared freely. Input is solicited from all team members.
- ❑ **13** Concerns are communicated openly.
- ❑ **14** The spirit of cooperation is stronger than the spirit of competition.
- ❑ **15** Team meetings end with a sense of accomplishment and on a positive note.

RESOURCES

Books and Articles

French, Nancy. 1997. Managing paraeducators. In *Supervising Paraeducators in School Settings: A Team Approach*, edited by A. L. Pickett & K. Gerlach. Austin, Tex.: Pro-Ed, Inc.

———. 1999. Paraeducators: Who are they and what do they do? *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 32 (1): 65-69.

———. 1999. Paraeducators and teachers: Shifting roles. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 32 (2): 69-73.

———. 2000. Taking time to save time: Delegating to paraeducators. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 32 (3): 79-83.

Gerlach, Kent. 2001. *The Paraeducator and Teacher Team: Strategies for Success—Roles, Responsibilities, and Ethical Issues*, 4th ed. Seattle, Wash.: Pacific Training Associates.

———. 2001. *The Paraeducator and Teacher Team: Strategies for Success—Communication and Team Building*, 4th ed. Seattle, Wash.: Pacific Training Associates.

———. 2001. *The Paraeducator and Teacher Team: Strategies for Success—Time Management for Teams*, 4th ed. Seattle, Wash.: Pacific Training Associates.

Heller, William 1997. Professional and ethical responsibilities of team members. In *Supervising Paraeducators in School Settings: A Team Approach*, edited by A. L. Pickett & K Gerlach. Austin, Tex: Pro-Ed, Inc.

Iowa Department of Education. 1998. *Guide for Effective Paraeducator Practices in Iowa*. Des Moines, Iowa: Author.

Mahar, Alice. n.d. *Professional Development for Educational Support Personnel: A Resource Manual of Elements of Current and Future Training for*

Professional Growth and Success. Washington, D.C.: National Education Association.

Minnesota Paraprofessional Project, Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota. 1999. *Minnesota Paraprofessional Guide*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Author.

Paraeducator Handbook. 1999. Burien, Wash: Puget Sound Educational Service District.

Pickett, Anna Lou. 1993. *Improving the Performance of Paraprofessionals in the Work Force: A Technical Assistance Manual for Administrators and Staff Developers*. New York: The National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services, Center for Advanced Study in Education, The Graduate School and University Center, City University of New York.

———. 1994. *A Training Program to Prepare Teachers to Supervise and Work Effectively with Paraprofessional Personnel*. New York: The National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services, Center for Advanced Study in Education, The Graduate School and University Center, City University of New York.

———. 1999. *Strengthening and Supporting Teacher/Provider-Paraeducator Teams: Guidelines for Paraeducators' Roles, Supervision, and Preparation*. New York: The National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services, Center for Advanced Study in Education Graduate Center, City University of New York.

Pickett, Anna Lou, K. Faison, J. Formanek, and B. Semrau. 1993. *A Core Curriculum and Training Program To Prepare Paraeducators To Work in Inclusive Classrooms Serving School Age Students with Disabilities*. New York: The National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services, Center for Advanced Study in Education, City University of New York.

Pickett, Anna Lou, and Kent Gerlach, eds. 1997. *Supervising Paraeducators in School Settings: A Team Approach*. Austin, Tex: Pro-Ed, Inc.

Pickett, Anna Lou, Stanley F. Vasa, and Allen L. Steckelberg. 1993. *Using Paraeducators Effectively in the Classroom.* Bloomington, Ind: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation.

National Education Association. 2000. *The NEA Paraeducator Handbook*. Washington, D.C.: Author.

———. 2000. *NEA Paraeducators and IDEA: What Paraeducators Need To Know To Advocate for Themselves.* Washington, D.C.: Author.

Safarik, Lynn. 1997. Team Roles in School Settings. In *Supervising Paraeducators in School Settings: A Team Approach*, edited by Anna Lou Pickett and Kent Gerlach. Austin, Tex.: Pro-Ed, Inc.

Utah State Department Office of Special Education. 1995. *Utah State Standards for Paraeducators in Special Education*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Author.

Vasa, Stan, and Allen L. Steckelberg. 1997. Paraeducators in school settings: administrative issues. In *Supervising Paraeducators in School Settings: A Team Approach*, edited by Anna Lou Pickett and Kent Gerlach. Austin, Tex.: Pro-Ed, Inc.

Videos

National Education Association. 2000. *Paraeducators and the IDEA*. Washington, D.C.: Author

Agency for Instructional Technology. *Before the Bell Rings: What Every Paraeducator Should Know*. n.d. Bloomington, Ind.: Author

Web Sites

Legislation and Paraeducators
Focuses on current legislation affecting paraeducators.
www.specialednews.com/story%20archive/0500/parastates0519.html

Council of Exceptional Children Career Profile for Paraeducators
Describes the nature of work, education required, resource information, and more.
www.cec.sped.org/c1/career_choices/profiles/professions/para_edu.html

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's Comprehensive Center Region X
Provides paraeducator links and resources.
nwrac.org/links/paraed.html

Paraeducator Issues
Contains information on competencies and performance indicators for paraeducators, mentoring programs, and sample record-keeping forces.
www.wa.nea.org/prf_dv/para_ed/para.html

Council of Exceptional Children Standards for Beginning Paraeducators
Contains information on CEC's knowledge and skill standards for beginning paraeducators of students with exceptionalities.
www.cec.sped.org/ps/parastds.html

National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities
Discusses ethical responsibilities, educational requirements, roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals, plus responsibilities of qualified teacher/service providers.
www.ldonline.org/njcld/paraprof298.html

The Growing Roles of Paraeducators
Designed to show the changing role of paraeducators amid teacher shortages.
www.specialednews.com/story%20archive/0500/paraeds0519.html

National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals
An annotated bibliography highlighting paraeducator training resources, administrative guidelines, and personnel preparation models.
www.nrcpara.org/bibliography/index.html

Technology, Research, and Innovation in Special Education
Provides information on training programs for paraprofessionals and supervising teachers and includes links to dozens of other sites.
www.trisped.org

Project Para
Offers training that is comprehensive, easily accessible, and beneficial to both paraeducators and the teachers who supervise them.
www.para.unl.edu

Organizations

American Physical Therapy Association
1111 North Fairfax Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
1-800-999-2782
www.apta.org

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
10801 Rockville Pike
Rockville, Maryland 20852
1-800-638-8255
www.asha.org

National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education
Council for Exceptional Children
1110 North Glebe Road, Suite 300
Arlington, Virginia 22201
1-800-641-7824
ncpse@cec.sped.org

National Education Association
1201 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
202-833-4000
www.nea.org

National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services
Utah State University
Logan, Utah 84322-6526
435-797-7272
www.nrcpara.org

Occupational Therapy Association
4720 Montgomery Lane
P.O. Box 31220
Bethesda, Maryland 20824-1220
301-652-2682
www.aota.org

Let's Team Up! A Checklist for Paraeducators, Teachers, and Principals

Teachers alone cannot meet the needs of all students. As schools change, the role of paraeducators has become increasingly important. That's why an effective school team is more critical than ever before. Teacher shortages, increased workloads, and the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms are just some of the factors that contribute to a growing recognition of paraeducators' vital contribution to enhanced student achievement. This unique checklist is written to help paraeducators, teachers, and principals understand their roles and responsibilities as they relate to each other. It's filled with helpful tips for teachers on working effectively with paraeducators, practical suggestions for paraeducators on clarifying their jobs and their relationships with students and school staff, and great advice for principals on the administrative supervision of paraeducators. When every member of the school team is successful, the entire school wins.

Let's Team Up! is part of the NEA Professional Library Checklist Series. Other titles in the Series include:

Bright Ideas
A Pocket Mentor for Beginning Teachers
By Mary C. Clement
Item #2153-3-00-C4

Countdown to the First Day of School, Revised Edition
By Leo M. Schell and Paul Burden
Item #2162-2-00-C4

The Discipline Checklist
Advice from 60 Successful Elementary Teachers
By Ken Kosier
Item #2152-5-00-C4

The Best of Works4Me
Winning Tips from Classroom Teachers
Item #2161-4-00-C4

To order, contact the NEA Professional Library at (800) 229-4200 or order online at www.nea.org/books.

nea
NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
NEA Professional Library
1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036
Item #2163-0-00-C4

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

NOTICE

Reproduction Basis

X	This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.
	This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").